



Embassy of the United States of America
Colombo

PRESS RELEASE

Tel: +94 (1) 249-8100
Fax: +94 (1) 244-9070

Email: AndersonJJ2@state.gov
<http://srilanka.usembassy.gov>
Release no. 20090219

US Government-funded Emergency Medical Services Launched in Jaffna Peninsula

Colombo, February 19, 2009: U.S. Embassy and Jaffna District representatives opened an emergency ambulance service and communications center on Wednesday, February 11, 2009. The event also marked the expansion of the emergency access phone system to the entire Jaffna District. Previously it was available only in Colombo, Kandy and Galle. Regional Director of Health Services Dr. Ketheeswaran and Jaffna District Secretary K. Ganesh were present, along with chief guest James R. Moore, Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy, who placed the inaugural 1-1-0 call to the communications center.

"Now, in case of a life-threatening emergency, people can call the 24-hour, 1-1-0 hotline for an ambulance," remarked Dr. Ketheeswaran. "We have coordinated all available ambulances in the Jaffna District to improve access to life saving emergency medical care," he added.

The project in Jaffna is an extension of the national 1-1-0 emergency services program by the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition and the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils to enhance access to emergency medical services in Sri Lanka. In addition to government resources, the project was funded by a \$200,000 grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the development agency of the U.S. Government, through its Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).

"The U.S. Government is pleased to support the expansion of emergency medical services in Jaffna," stated James R. Moore, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy. "Through this program, more than 100 people have been trained as emergency medical technicians, and

more than 650 doctors and nurses are being trained in advanced cardiac and trauma care. In addition, more than 12,000 people are receiving instruction in basic first aid, and 33 ambulances in the Jaffna District are being upgraded to include basic life support equipment and supplies,” he continued.

The first actual emergency call was received less than 24 hours after the opening ceremony. The ambulance responded immediately, and a trained staff member provided first aid to the patient within five minutes of the call for help, successfully transferring the patient to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital for additional treatment.

While the 1-1-0 hotline is only available in select areas, it is hoped that the project will expand to provide emergency care to all Sri Lankans island wide.

The American people, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, have provided development and humanitarian assistance in developing countries worldwide for nearly 50 years. Since 1956, USAID/Sri Lanka has invested nearly \$2 billion to benefit all the people of Sri Lanka.

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Caption for the photo: US Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission James R. Moore places an inaugural 1-1-0 call to the newly established Jaffna emergency communications center as Donnie Woodyard of Medical Teams International looks on.

Vindhya Malalasekera - Tissera
Information Specialist
Public Diplomacy Office of the American Embassy
44, Galle Road
Colombo 3
Sri Lanka.
Phone: + 94 11 249 8157 or + 94 11 249 8100 Ext 8157
Fax: + 94 11 244 9070
Mobile: + 94 11 77 770 9577
E mail: TisseraV@state.gov
<http://srilanka.usembassy.gov/>